

## FIGHTING for LIFE WITH A WILD PIG

**SOME Idea of What It Means to Face a Savage Little Creature That Knows No Fear and Has the Power of a Donkey Engine Behind Its Razor Like Tusks**



Caught a Limb Just Above Him and Swinging Out of the Way of the Mad-dened Animal

BY DERESLEY MORTON.

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WHEN the great navigator and explorer, Captain Cook, made his historic voyages in the southern latitudes he carried a quantity of live stock for food. Among the animals were some large English hogs, and a few of these were landed on North Island of the New Zealand domain and escaped into the forest. In one hundred years the stock has undergone a great change, has reverted to a state even wilder and fiercer than the original one, perhaps, and makes the finest of big game. The white bushmen of the North Island call these hogs "Captain Cooks" or "razorbacks," and the Maoris name them "rongotutes."

Good luck only kept me from being ripped to pieces by one of them in one of the hunts in which I participated in 1902 in the Taranaki district, and I acquired a very wholesome respect for them as game fighters and dangerous opponents.

Both male and female develop curved tusks that are both longer and sharper than those of the famous wild boars of Europe, northern Africa and India, and the beasts are larger, more rangy and are swifter. I have the tusks of the one which nearly did for me and my horse and they measure seven and one-half inches on the outside, while I have seen them mounted on the habillments of Maori tohunga or priests when they measured nine inches.

While in the short age the wild hog is compelled to rip up roots, turn over stones, toss aside small fallen trees and do other things that give him access to ants, snails, nuts, fungi and other food, and this use develops the incisors in the lower jaw till even a two-year-old will have very presentable arms of offence and defence.

The older boars and sows, following some natural instinct, grind out the inner sides of the triangular tips of the tusks until the points are as sharp as the points of a knife blade and the edges of the ground portion have a cutting capacity that is amazing. Put two or three hundred pounds of ferocious brawn behind a pair of tusks ground out in this fashion and the hunter faces a very dangerous brute.

Though little known to the outside world, the sporting New Zealanders are very fond of this sport and now and then expert "pig stickers" from India or from Egypt or the Sudan, for the most part British army officers, go to New Zealand to try the sport. I have never heard one of them fail to admit that the Captain Cook of North Island is the prince of them all in a pig.

Fifty years ago these pigs were found all over the island, from latitude 34 south to 40 south, but the settlers are driving them away from the plantations. The Maoris have been eating great quantities of them for food, and every time a big tract is made the subject of lumbering operations the first thing the bushmen are called upon to do is to drive the rongotutes away. It is not pleasant to have a peaceful gang of laborers armed only with axes called upon to fight two or three beasts of donkey engine power armed around the front with hooked daggers. The result is that the pigs have retreated slowly to the vast tracts of virgin bush in and about Mount Egmont, in the Taranaki district, in the Kaimanawa of the Hawkes Bay country, in the Raukumara of the Waikato district, around the great Lake Taupo and in the region from Mongonui in the extreme north, south to Otago.

The hunting which I most enjoyed was in the wilderness of Taranaki, on the eastern slopes of Mount Egmont, between New Plymouth and Stratford. One can always find a Captain Cook there and one can always get a hard ride and a good fight.

#### Comrades of the Fray,

The first requisite is a strong, fleet horse that is willing to break his neck if you are willing to break yours, and the second is a pig hating dog. The average fox dog or bound will turn tail before a Captain Cook, and the wolf and deer hounds are easy victims for the tusks. Sporting dogs are none too plentiful in New Zealand and it is rather costly to import dogs to

the first cry from the terrier they let their big voices speak and came leaping high over the undergrowth, plunged down the ravine and up again and went by me before I had my horse fully under way.

I caught the sound of a crashing in the bush to the right as if several large animals were running there on parallel tracks and it was soon obvious that



I Had Missed Him

my best speed could not equal that which the game and the dogs were making. Straight up the slope went the chase, with my friends hallooing in the rear as they sought a place to round the ravine. Now the pigs had gone over the ridge and the noise of the dogs was growing fainter. I put spurs to my horse and leaned low over the pommel of my English cross country saddle as I shot under the low boughs of the trees only raising my head to get the proper seat when my horse took fallen logs and clumps of rocks.

I had struck a trail and my horse was as glad as I to find clear going. It was a mad, mad half hour's ride, with the constant danger of having my brains knocked out against the limb of an overhanging tree or of being buried against a trunk if I lost my seat in the jumps. When I reached the crest the dogs had cornered a Captain Cook about a mile down the other side of the slope and I shot ahead. Now the riding was something to make a man's hair rise when he thinks of it in cold blood, but with the fever of the chase in his veins a hunter will take many chances and think nothing of them. I remember thinking of the difference between such a chase and the tame riding through the grass and brakes after pigs in other lands, where one overtakes the animal and stoops and lances it or cuts short its career with a rapier or sabre.

In a short time the growth blocked the way. The dogs and the pigs had gone through with scarcely lessened speed, but I wondered how they had done it.

I was hard at work with my slasher making a way for myself to the scene of conflict, when one of the Maoris came up and together we took turns in cutting our way through to a point where he could run

once more and I could mount and ride. In a little while we were close on the dogs, and, following the custom, I dismounted, tethering my horse to the limb of a tree and proceeding on foot with my spear.

My heart gave a great bound when I topped a rock and saw, in a sort of corner formed by a great burned-off tree and its stump, a magnificent tusker at bay. He was facing the three dogs, his hind quarters in the coil of advantage, and was making short charges at first one and then the other. One of the big dogs had a bad gasp in his shoulder and was bleeding profusely. It was beautiful to see the lightning like swing of the boar's head as he made his little rush and upward thrust to drive one of his curved ivory daggers into a dog. The very action expressed the power of the blow and gave a forecast of the execution if he struck his mark fairly.

The Maori behind me was crying some instructions in his native tongue, but I did not heed him; instead, swinging my spear into readiness, I advanced to invite the charge which would give me my opportunity to plunge the long blade into the particular spot behind the head that would give the game its quietus. What the Maori was saying, as I afterward learned, was for me to pick my tree to climb before I made my thrust.

#### The Wicked Little Pig.

Now the rongotute saw his new enemy, and, with a wicked little cry of rage, he charged, so swiftly and so viciously that he caught the terrier before the dog could sidestep, and bowled him out of the way, but in so doing diverted himself and shot by between me and the Maori, going straight for my horse. The poor helpless animal lunged back to tear loose, but the spring of the branch gave him no chance of a breaking jerk on the strap. Striking to rip the horse's flank, the boar plunged into the combat, but knocked the horse's legs from under him and for an instant the two rolled together in the grass. The elasticity of

Quickly as I leaped to one side, the point of his tusks caught my puttee on the right knee with the dangerous upward thrust, and I felt the ivory edge graze my flesh, while the ripping, tearing blow hurled me further out of his path, and I fell on my face, scrambling to my feet and up on the stump just as he came back at me with lowered head. The dogs saved me, for Wahanui, though he had dropped to the ground, was not near enough. They fell on his flanks and though he did not turn away from me I had a chance to leap to the ground and recover my spear. Wahanui was saying "ki-tao" with great vigor and between times shouting instructions to me to drive the spear home this time even if I did not strike the vital spot.

By manoeuvring around the stump I got a position where the big fellow could charge me in a short distance only and he lost no time in freeing himself from the dogs and making the effort.

Shaking himself like a dog, he lowered his head and plunged. Bracing myself, I suddenly lowered the point of the tuihu and felt the heavy shock as it struck him deep in the very spot for which I had aimed.

Even so, before he fell I was forced back two paces and the lashings of the slasher were so badly sprung that it was of no more use to me that day. But the big fellow was dead, though the dogs, my horse, Wahanui and I all had had a very close call from his ivory

#### A Terrifying Charge.

A little later Captain Mylesing had a terrible encounter in Maungataniwa, with a far less fortunate ending. He and Tuatini, a younger cousin of Wahanui, were both mounted and were riding home at the close of a hunt in which the party had become scattered. They were hurrying, as they wished to get into good going ground before dark came down, and the tired dogs were trotting to heel. The scent of rongotute came strongly from the left, where there was a



With the Constant Danger of Having My Brains Knocked Out Against the Limb of an Overhanging Tree

deep bay among the papa rock. The dogs plunged at once, and it was apparent in a few seconds' time that the bay was a blind hole and the quarry was cornered before it had had any chance whatever to run. Tethering their horses, they cut their way more or less easily into the bush and found that the place where the pigs had been was a sort of natural amphitheatre save in wet weather, when it was filled with the waters of a torrent that at this time was no more than a trickling stream running in a fall over the rocks at the back. From the signs more than one pig had been stirred, and it was not long before a young boar and a sow were made out moving along the rocks in the fringe of bush trying to find an outlet or a place where they could climb the sides of the bay.

Captain Mylesing instructed the Maori to take the one while he took the other, and, cutting their way, they advanced, constantly ready for the charge. The boar came first, and Mylesing speared him nicely, noticing as he did so that the dogs were plunging and lunging in the bush to the left of him. He was just about to withdraw his spear when there was a terrific charge from a big old pig who had been in the shadow. The Maori was busy with the sow and was some fifty feet away. The charge caught the officer entirely unprepared and the boar's tusk, catching him in the thigh ripped him up to the waist and hurled him to the ground. He got to his feet, snatched the spear from the body of the first boar and tried to get the big pig on the return charge, but he was unable to act with sufficient quickness in his wounded state and in a moment more was face down on the rocks with another terrible rip in his chest.

Tuatini rushed to the rescue and drove his knife into the boar's heart and dragged Captain Mylesing into the open. He was unconscious and in a pretty bad state from loss of blood and from shock when the Maori brought him into the pa, tied in the saddle, but skilful native surgery kept life in his body till he could be taken aboard a schooner in Waingaroa Bay. He recovered ultimately, but he will never hunt again. He has a limp and a lame shoulder.

He is but one of the many who have felt the tusks of the Captain Cooks, and serious injuries and fatalities are not unusual; in fact, it has often been stated that the percentage of loss of life is higher than in lion hunting, and some of the very best sportsmen who have ever come to New Zealand have ranked the rongotute close to the Malay seladang and the African buffalo, admittedly the most dangerous beasts to hunt in all the world.